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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ALMATY NOTES, JULY 21 - AUGUST 1, 2008

¶1. The "Almaty Notes" series is intended to maintain focus on developments in civil society, the media, and the opposition in Kazakhstan's "southern capital" following the move of the Embassy to Astana.

Oppositionists Join With Nur Otan in Public Council

¶2. A public council has been set up in Almaty to discuss and propose solutions to social problems, Vremya reported on July 23. Council members include the deputy head of the Almaty branch of the Nur Otan Party, Tokmukhamed Sadykov, and Almaty's deputy mayor, as well as opposition activists Asylbek Kozhakhmetov of the Shanyrak movement, Petr Svoik of the Azat Party, Amantay Akhetov of the Communist Party and Amirbek Togusov of the National Social Democratic Party. Kozhakhmetov told Vremya that political differences between the opposition and Nur Otan should not prevent the opposition from working to resolve the problems of ordinary people. According to Kozhakhmetov, the council will focus, inter alia, on land and housing conflicts. The council's recommendations will be addressed to the parties directly involved in a given dispute as well as to the mayor's office.

Nazarbayev Recommends Limits on Almaty Construction

¶3. During a July 24 visit to Almaty, President Nazarbayev instructed Almaty mayor Akhmetzhan Yesimov to review construction in Almaty and to take measures to limit it in the central part of the city. The President recommended that new construction be concentrated on the city's outskirts, in districts where many migrants have settled in recent years. "Let construction companies demolish old housing -- legal and illegal -- there and provide the current residents with new places to live," Nazarbayev argued.

Women Invalids Appeal to Timur Kulibayev

¶4. The Society of Women Invalids, Bibi-Ana, has addressed an appeal to Timur Kulibayev, President Nazarbayev's son-in-law, asking him to not seize their office space. Bibi-Ana's lawyer purportedly learned that Kulibayev was the ultimate owner of the company which bought the building in which Bibi-Ana's office is located. This company won a lawsuit against Bibi-Ana, resulting in a court ruling to evict the organization from the building. Bibi-Ana's leader, Bibigul Imangazina, said that the association unites 217,000 women invalids and will not give up its fight to keep the office space.

Suicide Threat

¶5. On July 21, Murat Telibekov and other activists from the Union of Muslims held a press conference in Almaty to express their support for Takhirzhan Akhmetov, who cut off his finger in public, protesting the failure of court bailiffs to implement a court ruling

Akhmetov won against a business partner. At the press conference, the Union of Muslims appealed to President Nazarbayev and Prime Minister Masimov asking them to fire the Chairman of the Supreme Court, the Minister of Justice, and the Prosecutor General. For his part, Akhmetov threatened to send his amputated finger to Nazarbayev or to commit suicide by self-immolation if Nazarbayev does not take action to resolve his problem.

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